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SUBJECT: BURUNDI HOSTS TANZANIAN PRESIDENT

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[1](#)1. (U) Summary. Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete made his first state visit to Burundi June 19-21 in answer to President Nkurunziza's November 2006 visit to Tanzania. Kikwete's visit immediately followed talks in Dar-Es-Salaam between President Nkurunziza and FNL leader Agathon Rwasa. Tanzanian officials in Bujumbura denied that Kikwete's visit was related, noting that the trip had been planned for several months. President Kikwete told the Burundian media that with the return of peace and security in Burundi, refugees in Tanzania should begin returning to their homes in Burundi, but insisted that the decision to leave was not Tanzania's alone. He also visited a sugar-processing facility in Rutana province, calling for increased international cooperation between Burundi and Tanzania in this field. Although some Burundians expressed discontent with the magnitude of Burundi's official response to Kikwete's visit, worrying about its social and economic costs, most recognized the opportunities in welcoming the president of one of their most important neighbors. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, in his first head-of-state visit to Burundi since assuming office in December 2005, met officially with Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza and other high-ranking officials during his three-day stay. According to Tanzanian Embassy officials, the June 19-21 visit was an opportunity for President Kikwete to reciprocate the November 2006 visit by President Nkurunziza to Tanzania. Alex Rutatangwa, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission at the Tanzanian mission in Bujumbura, reminded Emboff in a June 24 meeting that President Kikwete made official visits to other states in the region following his assumption of office in late December 2005. Rutatangwa stated that President Kikwete did not include Burundi in his official visits at that time so as not to interfere in ongoing talks between the new government of President Nkurunziza and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL (FNL).

[1](#)3. (SBU) President Kikwete's state visit immediately followed meetings between Nkurunziza and FNL leader Agathon Rwasa held in Dar-Es-Salaam (Reftels) on June 17. Rutatanga referred to the timing of Kikwete's visit to Bujumbura as a "fortuitous coincidence", stating that the dates of the visit were, of course, set several months in advance. He said that President Kikwete did not arrive in Burundi with an formal agenda for bilateral discussions with President Nkurunziza, but acknowledged that the "fortuitous coincidence" of the meetings in Dar-Es-Salaam with Kikwete's visit brought the issue to the forefront. Rutatangwa did not divulge details of their discussions on the peace process.

14. (U) Responding to questions from the media, President Kikwete addressed the anticipated December 2007 return of more than 150,000 Burundian refugees living in Tanzanian camps since 1993. He pointed out that while the refugees were in Tanzania for security reasons, having fled the decade-long war, they could now return safely to Burundi due to its growing peace and improved security. Noting the lessening security concerns which once forced the refugees to flee to Tanzania, Kikwete asked why these Burundians would want to continue living in refugee camps in Tanzania, even joking that "President Nkurunziza was yesterday a leader of the rebel movement, but he is now the President of the Republic." However, he indicated that it was not Tanzania alone who would decide the repatriation of the refugees living there, but the Tripartite Commission of Burundi, Tanzania, and the High Commission for Refugees. Kikwete added, though, that should a former refugee choose to stay in Tanzania, all legal procedures concerning naturalization must be followed.

15. (U) President Kikwete also toured a sugar-processing facility in Rutana province, along the frontier with Tanzania's Kigoma province. The object of his visit to the Mosso Sugar Company (SOSUMO) factory was to investigate the potential for increased Burundian-Tanzanian cooperation in the cultivation and processing of sugar cane, one of Burundi's most important agricultural products. Kikwete asked the Governor of Rutana to make contact with his counterpart in Kigoma, whom he called on to cede land to SOSOMU for increased sugar cane production.

16. (U) Comment. Kikwete is the most senior leader to visit Burundi since Nkurunziza assumed office in August 2005. Although thousands of Burundians lined the streets of Bujumbura to welcome President Kikwete, some civil society members complained that the massive mobilization was forced, and suggested a return to the years of dictatorship and one-party rule. As reported by Radio Isanganiro, the vice president of the Observatory on Governmental Action, a Burundian NGO that promotes good governance, worried that the grand welcome and parade-like atmosphere impeded vital public services. She expressed concern that the welcome unnecessarily drained the public treasury at a time of economic troubles. In general, though, most Burundians are pleased with the presidential visit of one of their most important neighbors, particularly now that Burundi is joining itself economically to the East African Community. Even if this visit was just one of reciprocity, Burundi benefits by staying close to this large, and vitally important, partner. End Comment.

MOLLER